

VLR-4/19/77

NRHP-1/26/78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

St. John's Lutheran Church and Cemetery

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

200 feet N of U. S. Route 21, .2 mile NW of interchange 21
of Interstate Route 81; NW of Wytheville.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wytheville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

X VICINITY OF

Ninth (William C. Wampler)

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Wythe

CODE

197

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

X BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

X OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

X PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

X OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

X YES: RESTRICTED

YES UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATERESIDENCE

X RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

X OTHER: [Cemetery]

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Trustees, St. John's Lutheran Church

c/o Holy Trinity
Lutheran Church

STREET & NUMBER

405 West Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Wytheville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 24382

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wythe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wytheville

STATE

Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)

TITLE

(1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE

1958

X FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D. C.

STATE

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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1968, 1972, 1977 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
Richmond, Virginia 23219

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

300 feet; then running approximately 500 feet ENE following northern edge of Cemetery to NE corner of said Cemetery and point of origin.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. John's Lutheran Church and Cemetery occupies an open hillside on U. S. Route 21 about one mile north of Wytheville. The present church, erected in 1854, replaces an earlier structure erected shortly after the congregation was founded in 1800. It stood a few yards northeast of the present building, and the two coexisted for several years. An 1856 watercolor by Lewis Miller shows both churches. The earlier one was a three-bay, frame structure with a gable-end entrance decorated with a pedimented doorway.

The present white frame church, 55 feet by 45, is covered with plain weatherboards, most of which are original, and is set upon a high, coursed limestone basement. It is two bays long (Miller's watercolor showing a three-bay building is apparently incorrect) and three bays across the gable-end facade. The entrance is into the ground (basement) level at the center of the south end and is flanked by two-tier windows with ten-over-fifteen sash above and eight-over-eight sash below. Miller's watercolor shows that the lower windows on either side were the former doors to the building, and that it was entered at first-floor level (by way of exterior stairs not shown in his painting). The change was made in 1899 when the cellar was excavated to provide space for Sunday School classes. Twenty-over-twenty sash are used in the long-wall windows, and the whole is covered with a gable roof embellished with a box cornice returned at the gable ends.

The plan of the church was formerly that of a single auditorium room with a deep gallery at the south end, reached by a winder stair (now enclosed) in the southeast corner. In 1899 when the door was changed a matchboard partition was erected to make a vestibule about two-thirds the depth of the gallery, and interior steps to the ground floor entrance were installed.

The interior of the auditorium is decorated with a plain wainscot and with symmetrically molded window trim with "bull's-eye" paterae. There is a raised platform, installed in 1899 when the original was removed, at the center of the north wall; it is flanked by four rows of slip pews on either side. These, with the slip pews on the main floor, are very simple, having undecorated high, square ends, and appear to be very early, if not original. A rail the height of the pew backs runs down the central section of pews the length of the auditorium to separate the men's from the women's side. In 1899 a section of this was removed every third pew to allow easier movement between the two sides.

The face of the gallery which is supported on two square fluted Greek Doric piers is paneled in an alternating pattern of long rectangular and small square recessed panels. The paint on the gallery dates from 1887. The panels and the flutes of the piers are painted a creamy brown color; the sides of the piers and the stiles and rails of the gallery fascia are painted chocolate brown. The pews in the gallery are original. They consist of low benches with slab backs supported by rear braces and have no end boards.

The ceiling has been taken down revealing that the roof structure draws upon German framing systems practiced in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is a double roof consisting of seven heavy couples

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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DESCRIPTION:

of truncated principal rafters, which terminate at their collars and which are of the same scantling as the principals. Two heavy purlins are lapped to the backs of the principals on each slope, and the light common rafters are in turn carried on them. Only the light ridge board at the apex of the common rafters betrays the late date of the roof.

The cemetery is as significant as the church. A handsome collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century funerary art, it is particularly notable for its group of approximately thirty early nineteenth-century, German-style monuments. Most of these were carved by Laurence Krone (d. 1836), the only early Virginia German carver known by name. One of the principal works in Krone's oeuvre is the tomb he carved for George Flohr (d. 1826), St. John's first pastor, "at his private cost." A three-part monument, it consists of a headstone, an unusually large footstone, and a coffin-shaped slab with a central ridge. All are characteristic products of Krone's art. The headstone has rounded shoulders and a central three-quarter-round element with a stylized rose in it. It is lettered in Latin: "IN MEMORIAM/REVERENDI/GEORGII D. FLOHR/OBIIT XXX DEI APRILIS/ANNO DOMINI MDCCCxxvi/NATUS ANNOS. LXIII./ MENSES VIII." A short Latin epitaph is followed by an English translation of the vital data. The front and edges of the thick stone have a serrated "pie-crust" decoration typical of Krone's work, and the reverse of the stone (usually decorated in German practice) has one of Krone's favorite motifs--a heart formed by the stems and blooms of lilies with a central rose and with attenuated colonettes flanking it. The coffin and the footstone also have serrated edges. The footstone has a long epitaph in German inscribed with Gothic lettering. The reverse of the footstone is embellished with another favored Krone design--three roses springing from a heart.

Other Krone stones in the cemetery dating from 1812 to 1826 display a variety of striking decorations. In addition to the usual complement of lilies and roses there are a stylized sunburst and the moon surrounded by seven stars. Besides Krone's work there are four or five stones by other carvers of the same period, several wooden markers whose inscriptions are worn away, and many elaborate late nineteenth-century monuments.

DU

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Funerary Art |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1854 (ch.) ; 1804-present (Cem) BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Picturesquely situated on a rolling hillside near Wytheville, St. John's Lutheran Church and Cemetery are remarkable specimens of the material culture of an area of western Virginia noted for its concentrated German settlement. The white church, with its elaborate German-type roof, and the large collection of early gravestones together form one of the most complete assemblages extant in Virginia of the religious arts of the German immigrant groups. Most of the stones were carved by Laurence Krone (d. 1836), one of the most accomplished of the Virginia carvers, and the only one identified by name. Among his masterpieces is the 1826 tomb of George Flohr, an early leader of the Lutherans in the area.

Flohr (c. 1763-1826), a German immigrant, studied theology in Madison County, Virginia, taught school, and preached in that area for several years before being called in 1799 to Wythe County where he spent the rest of his career. Flohr simultaneously served as many as five congregations over the course of the next twenty-seven years, but St. John's, organized in 1800 as a joint venture of Evangelical Lutheran and German Reformed believers, was his home base. He lived near there and later in life, as his health failed, he gave up his other charges but continued to minister to the Wytheville church.

St. John's was the mother church of a number of other Lutheran churches in the area and reached its peak in the mid-nineteenth century. The present church building was erected in 1854 to replace the original building which had been constructed soon after 1800 on land given by Daniel Etter (whose grave is marked by a Krone stone). In the latter part of the nineteenth century St. John's strength began to wane with the organization of several new offshoot congregations in the immediate area, most notably Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Wytheville proper, in 1876. In 1902 St. John's had 109 members; twenty years later these had dwindled to 30. In 1924 the congregation affiliated itself with the Holy Trinity organization, and regular services were ended at the old building. It has since been used once yearly.

When George Flohr died, noted his biographer in 1837, a tombstone was erected for him by "the late Mr. Crone, a member of the German Reformed Church, at his private cost. A rock called the mountain marble has been most tastefully hewed and chiseled into the form of a coffin." Little is known about Laurence Krone, who appeared in Wythe County sometime before 1815, the year that he first bought land there. That he was the creator, and not merely the donor, of Flohr's tomb is demonstrated by a similar monument, the Denton family memorial in Roanoke County, which is signed: LAURENCE KRONE STON MASON. He is documented as having made the gates and wall and two table tombs for the Cloyd family burying ground at Back Creek Farm, Pulaski County, and

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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SIGNIFICANCE:

stylistic elements allow the near-certain attribution to him of the other stones at St. John's, as well as those in the Fort Chiswell cemetery in Wythe County, and other scattered works. Krone, besides being the only early western Virginia carver known by name, was noteworthy for his unusual coffin-shaped tombs, for the skill with which he lettered his monuments, for being one of the few carvers to use German inscriptions, and for the generally superior quality of his designs and their execution.

DU

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kegley, F. B. and Mary. St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church.
Wytheville, Va.: 1961.

Wust, Klaus. Folk Art in Stone. Edinburg, Va.: 1970.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately 6 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A

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| 4 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The approximately 6 acres comprising the property of St. John's Lutheran Church and Cemetery are bounded by a line beginning at a point at the NE corner of the Cemetery and extending approximately 500 feet SSE along west side of a dead-end road to intersection of said road with State Route 657; then extending approximately 500 feet SW along north side of State Route 657 to intersection with U.S. Route 21/52; then extending nearly 200 feet WNW along north side of U.S. Route 21/52; then running approximately 600 feet NNW to NW corner of Cemetery, having followed western edge of said Cemetery for last (See Continuation Sheet # 1)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff.

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

April 1977

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3143

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☐

STATE ☒

LOCAL ☐

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE APR 19 1977

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(scale: 1:24000)
1968

A - 17/490990/4090410

